



Le vite de' pittori, scultori, ed architetti..., Rome, 1642 Giovanni Baglione Jacob Hess Herwarth Röttgen Die Künstlerbiographien von Giovanni Battista Passeri Jacob Hess Vite de' pittore, scultori ed architetti moderni Lione Pascoli Valentino Martinelli Alessandro Marabottini

Citation

Connors, Joseph. 1998. "Le Vite de' Pittori, Scultori, Ed Architetti..., Rome, 1642 Giovanni Baglione Jacob Hess Herwarth Röttgen Die Künstlerbiographien von Giovanni Battista Passeri Jacob Hess Vite de' Pittore, Scultori Ed Architetti Moderni Lione Pascoli Valentino Martinelli Alessandro Marabottini." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 57 (4) (December): 469–471. doi:10.2307/991466.

Published Version

10.2307/991466

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Giovanni Baglione

**LE VITE DE' PITTORI, SCULTORI, ED
ARCHITETTI . . . ,** ROME, 1642.

Facsimile with notes on the first three *giornate* by Jacob Hess and Herwarth Röttgen; Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Studi e testi, 368–370), 1995, facsimile of 310 pp., commentary of 849 pp. L 450,000 (paper). ISBN 88-210-0661-1, 88-210-0664-6, 88-210-0665-4

Jacob Hess

**DIE KÜNSTLERBIOGRAPHIEN VON
GIOVANNI BATTISTA PASSERI**

(Römische Forschungen der Bibliotheca Hertziana, XI), Leipzig and Vienna, 1934. Reprint by Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome, printed at Worms am Rhein: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1995, xxxix + 439 pp., 4 illus. DM 185 (cloth), distributed by Casalini Libri. ISBN 3-88462-120-3.

Lione Pascoli

**VITE DE' PITTORE, SCULTORI ED
ARCHITETTI MODERNI**

Valentino Martinelli and Alessandro Marabottini, eds. Perugia: Electa Editori Umbri, 1992, 1170 pp., 8 illus. L 180,000 No ISBN.

The primary sources for Roman baroque art are now being reprinted, enabling libraries that did not acquire them in the first wave of reprints in the 1930s to catch up at last. Baldinucci's lives were reprinted in 1974–1975, Bellori's in 1976, and Pascoli's in 1992. They are all worth having, but none more so than the volumes under review. The first two represent the life's work of a pioneer of German *Quellenkritik*, Jacob Hess (1885–1969).

Hess's story is interesting and touching. He worked on the Passeri manuscripts between 1928 and 1931, and the Hertziana Library brought out his edition in 1934, in record time. Hess saw that his next project would have to be Baglione. The problem was not an edition, since Baglione had lived long enough to see his book through the press in 1642. What the lives needed were modern notes, and these Hess set out to provide. But times had changed. A Jew could not remain safely in Germany or

continue to be employed by a German institution in Rome, even one, like the Hertziana, founded by a Jew. The Vatican Library took Hess in, giving him a place to work and a succession of two-year contracts. They paid for his ticket to London in 1939, rescued him from British internment, and kept his salary coming through the diplomatic pouch. They waited patiently for the manuscript while he worked away at the Warburg and the Courtauld. When it finally came in 1950, they were appalled. It had grown beyond all proportion. They found it preposterously over-detailed, and in addition it was still unfinished. They rejected it and wrote off what seemed like a bad investment.

Nearing seventy, Hess gave up on Baglione around 1954 and died in 1969. The director of the Hertziana, Wolfgang Lotz, turned over the notes to Herwarth Röttgen, the up-and-coming man in early seicento studies, who worked on it with immense dedication between 1968 and 1973 and in a final spurt in 1984–1988. The Vatican published it in 1995, so more than sixty years after the inception of the project, the two institutions that nurtured it have given us three splendid volumes.

One volume is a facsimile of the entire 1642 edition. The other two contain introductions by both Hess and Röttgen (the latter rather more penetrating), and the most learned and complete commentary ever written for a text of this sort, as well as a meticulous index. But the enterprise is not yet complete. The commentary covers only the first three of the five sections, or *giornate*, into which Baglione divided his lives. The commentary on the two final *giornate* is announced, but (perhaps wisely) no publication date has been set. These two *giornate* are much longer than the first three; in effect, we are still waiting for the commentary on about three-fifths of the text. With seven hundred pages of notes thus far, and one might guess a thousand or so still to come, or maybe more if an exponentially growing body of scholarship is to be absorbed and if artists like Caravaggio and Rubens are to be given their due, this will be a well-annotated text.

Giovanni Baglione (1566–1643) worked on the big fresco projects that Sixtus V and Clement VIII commissioned around the turn of the seventeenth century. He won his knighthood for an altarpiece in St.

Peter's in 1606. His heroes were the men whose golden chains were forged in the same crucible, especially the Cavaliere d'Arpino, Federico Zuccari, and the band of brothers who clustered around the newly born Accademia di San Luca. He never fails to mention if an artist's portrait hangs in the Academy, or if he remembered the Academy in his will. Baglione himself recalled with pride the crowds of literati who flocked to Zuccari's house (now the Bibliotheca Hertziana), and to his dying day he never forgot the contemptuous dismissal Zuccari gave Caravaggio's new paintings in S. Luigi dei Francesi. The Academy gave artists status as well as intellectual focus, and it is status, not style, that is the golden thread running through the *vite*. As an artist, Baglione learned much from Caravaggio, and his *Divine Love* shows him at his most Caravaggesque. But Baglione took Caravaggio to court for saying, among other insults, that the gold chain he wore around his neck should be of iron and wrapped around his feet. Intensely sensitive to every nuance of status, Baglione's lives are the best-possible source for the phenomenon of the courtly artist. Although Baglione excluded living artists, he made one exception—himself—and in his lengthy autobiography he tells the world how “he upheld the decorum of his position, defended and honored the profession, and earned it the respect of the great” (vol. 1, 307).

Baglione's organizing principle was to include artists in chronological order according to their date of death, grouping these deaths by pontificate. Each pope is introduced with a short chapter on his main achievements, which include not only art but urban infrastructure. The chapter on Urban VIII that heads the final *giornata* gives Baglione a chance to mention a few artists of the new generation who were changing the face of Rome as he wrote. Gianlorenzo Bernini, Pietro da Cortona, and Francesco Borromini get laconic compliments, but his heart is with the generation of 1600.

These are brief lives. There is no Vasarian teleology, no grand theoretical framework, no ekphrasis. However, there are many attributions, and since Baglione had a good eye and spent years going around the churches and palaces of Rome, he is seldom wrong. When an attribution is

based on hearsay, he lets us know, and a "dicono" from Baglione can still devastate a work at auction. He loved facts and crams them in; he covers more than two hundred artists and architects and includes an appendix on engravers. He also loved vivid personalities; like a good British obituary editor, he tells the truth even about the dead.

Toward the end, one can see the old man sitting around, waiting for the great to die off so that he can squeeze in their obituary. Baglione's old colleague the Cavaliere d'Arpino predeceased him and was rewarded with a handsome life. Luckily, so did the dastardly Gaspare Celio, who cheated his patrons, got a knighthood fraudulently, wrote books full of errors (in particular a guidebook that mentions no works by Baglione), and locked up his wife like a nun for forty-five years in a house with the windows nailed shut. Time worked in Baglione's favor. He was grateful to live so long, not to see the new but to tell the truth about the men of his own time.

"This book is completely worthless" (vol. 2, 51). This is the harsh judgment that the great critic Giovanni Pietro Bellori penned into his copy around 1667. Bellori, when very young, had been persuaded to write a poem, "Alla pittura," for the front of Baglione's book, but he later regretted both the poem and the connection. Baglione, he stated, was a terrible painter and a worse writer. And in any case, with the exception of the Carracci, he wrote about a generation beyond redemption: "He praises the unworthy." Even when he damns Celio, it is just one dumbbell ("goffo") exposing another. When Bellori went on to write his own *Vite* in 1672, it had a philosophical basis, reveled in ekphrasis, and focused not on two hundred but on twelve artists, the great reformers, men who had a glimpse of the Ideal. Bellori is the founder of theoretical art history, the man who gave Panofsky the title for one of his first books, *Idea*.

Baglione mined a more sociological vein. He leads not to Panofsky but to Haskell. He treasured decorous behavior and recorded all signs of social status, including houses, dress, collections, permission to wear a sword, splendid funerals, and tombs. He has space for every artist, no matter how "minor," from Rubens to the men who painted little pictures on tin

for the Jesuits to take to India. He gives praise where his society thought praise was due. Thus he admires Ottaviano Mascarino, who left all his drawings to the Academy and did a spiral staircase that would have rendered him immortal even if he had never done anything else, and Carlo Maderno, who won friends in all the noble families of the city. He includes men whose ambiguous careers were lived out in the court more than in the studio or building yard. He includes even the failures, like Stefano Maderno, whose lucrative job at the custom house kept him from sculpture, or Pompeo Targone, whose little models for bridges and siege machines looked just fine but never worked, or Mario Arconio, a courtier-architect who abandoned his master just before his unexpected election as pope. Had he played his cards right, Arconio might have been another Domenico Fontana. He left behind few buildings but an expressive phrase, "the tears of Mario Arconio," a watchword for inconsolable sorrow (vol. 1, 231).

Bellori was nevertheless fascinated by the book that he despised, and he kept reading it, leaving marginal notes, *postille*, in several copies. Two of these copies in the library of the Accademia dei Lincei have been known since 1935, when Valerio Mariani published a facsimile that included the *postille*. The most famous example of the dialogue between text and notes concerns Borromini (not dead in 1642 and thus not eligible for a life, but mentioned in passing in the chapter on the patronage of Urban VIII). Baglione thought the freshly finished church of S. Carlino was beautiful and imaginative ("bella chiesetta, la quale è leggiadra, e capricciosa architettura di Francesco Borromini Lombardo"). But Bellori's pen dripped poison onto the margin: "Ugly and deformed. A most ignorant gothic architect, corruptor of architecture and infamy of our century" (G. Baglione, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori, et architetti* [Rome, 1642], ed. V. Mariani [Rome, 1935], 180).

Most students of sixteenth-century art will be surprised to learn that there is a third copy of Baglione with Bellori *postille*, hidden in the Vatican and noticed by only a few scholars (like Eberhard Hempel, Borromini's first biographer, Cesare D'Onofrio, and now Hess/Röttgen). In this copy the interesting life is that of Caravaggio, where Bel-

lori covered every inch of margin with his comments. The trouble is that the life of Caravaggio, who died under Paul V, occurs in Baglione's fourth *giornata*, and so even though the aim of the present edition is to reproduce all *postille* in every copy of Baglione, the notes have not yet gotten up to Caravaggio. For the impatient, here is a preview of what Bellori scribbled in 1666–1667 (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ottob. Lat. 2977, 136–139).

No matter what Baglione might say about Caravaggio's paintings, their stock has risen, Bellori says, while that of the much-praised Zuccari and the Cavaliere d'Arpino has fallen. Even if Caravaggio did not achieve nobility and (as Salvator Rosa once told Bellori) was inexpert at histories, he was a true painter, "gran naturalista e pittor vero, con disegno e colorito tremendo." His new manner beat all the weak manners of his day, but he was ferocious, and so was not liked. His prices today (1666–1667) would be two or three times those of a contemporary like Cristoforo Roncalli. He was not the "ruin of painting," and even if his kind of painting after nature produced defects, since the artist has to select the most perfect from nature (this is typical Bellori), nevertheless the nude body closely studied is better than the dry rules of theory. Annibale Carracci used to say (Bellori heard this from people who knew his humpbacked helper) that Caravaggio was everyone's master for truth and solidity of chiaroscuro. He may not have had decorum, nobility, or grace, but he had truth, force, and weight. He was worth a hundred Bagliones. If he had been a peaceful man, he would have been held in the highest esteem during his lifetime. Indeed he was esteemed, but he was not loved. In these *postille* we can feel the magnetic attraction that led Bellori to include Caravaggio among his original twelve *vite*, though by 1672, the date of publication, his admiration had cooled.

Passeri (1610/16–1679) was a philosophy student who took to painting late and never achieved much. In spite of the occasional commission, almost nothing from his brush survives. He adored Domenichino and became his Ruskin. The Academy provided an outlet for his literary talents, and he gave three lectures there between 1662 and 1673. If Baglione had been the continuator of Vasari, then Pas-

seri wanted to be the continuator of Baglione. He began to write his lives around 1653–1663, did more serious drafts in 1670–1675, and was still working on them when he died in 1679. They were not published until 1772, and not digested until Hess's splendid edition of 1934. Passeri finished thirty-six lives and projected forty-four in all, three times as many as the fastidious Bellori but only one-sixth as many as Baglione.

Passeri, like Baglione, organized his lives by pontificate and year of death. But as he progressed, he came more and more under the influence of Bellori. The rhetorical pressure of his writing increased by a few atmospheres. Although he never lost his devotion to "una verità pura e sincera," he became more philosophical, and in the preface to each life he takes time to rehearse the grand platitudes on talent, nature, and fortune. At the outset he had distrusted princes and wanted to dedicate the book to St. Luke; by the end he was proposing a dedication to Louis XIV. But he did hard research, which is why we treasure his book.

Passeri wanted to give the reader more of the variety of human genius than Bellori did, but also to go into greater depth than Baglione did. Astrologers, he says, now study six magnitudes of stars, not just the brightest fixtures of the firmament. The mosaicist Calandra and the woman Caterina Ginnasi are included because they are rare. He wanted representatives of all the temperaments, including the melancholy Testa, the sanguine Tassi, the choleric Lunghi, and the phlegmatic Caroselli. The Roman art world was seen as a microcosm, a theater of the comedy of human life. Originality is still treasured by Passeri, and in his pages we have the last fine appreciation of baroque caprice, license, and unclassical spontaneity. It is no wonder that he makes a good biographer of Borromini, Cortona, and Rainaldi.

Passeri was not the last word in baroque *vite*. Lione Pascoli (1674–1744), who published his lives in 1730–1736, was perhaps the weakest of these biographers but the most interesting man. After a youth spent studying drawing in his native Perugia, he went to Rome and switched to law, becoming a political thinker of some originality. He traveled all over, from Poland to England, and wrote a program for the mod-

ernization of Rome along the lines of London and Paris. It was said that he had a head that could run a kingdom. Had he not died in an accident in 1744 he might have become a key adviser to the reforming pope Benedict XIV. He put together a large picture collection. Of his 320 paintings, about fifty survive in the museum in Deruta.

Pascoli worked on his *vite* for most of his life, but in the end he borrowed and sometimes plagiarized from Baglione and Baldinucci, as well as from the unpublished manuscripts of Passeri and Nicola Pio. Still there is much of value. He is the only author to give us a life of Giovanni Battista Soria, the carpenter-architect who built some of the great facades of the Roman baroque, and who held the warring factions of the profession together by sheer force of personality. He gives us the moving story of Gisleni, the mathematician-architect who could not make a career in Rome and who passed his life in the service of the Wasa dynasty in Poland, returning to design his tomb in Sta. Maria del Popolo: "Architectus non uno in Capitolio fuit" (1002). He defends the moderns against excessive valuation of the ancients: "Someday, thousands of years from now, we will be the ancients" (989). But he could not stand the *barocchetto* of his own day. Good taste would be in mourning, says this last continuator of Vasari, if Borromini, Bernini, or Cortona could come back and see what their followers were doing.

The Pascoli edition of 1992 was more than a decade in gestation. The editors put together a team of forty-six young and very diligent scholars to annotate the eighty-eight lives. Thus far have we come from the one-man enterprises of Hess. The introduction redigests the still-unsurpassed research of Eugenio Battisti ("Lione Pascoli scrittore d'arte," *Rendiconti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, ser. 8, 8 [1953], 122–151; and "Lione Pascoli, Luigi Vanvitelli e l'urbanistica italiana del settecento," *Atti del VIII Convegno Nazionale di Storia dell'architettura* (1953) [Rome, 1956], 51–64). The notes read like a compressed computer file. In this amazing overload of data nuggets are abundant, but no clear line has been drawn between compilation and contribution. The huge bibliography, organized in the maddening Italian way, by year, is complete to 1990.

Pascoli knew why artists dropped their brushes and took up the pen: "Animals all die, plants of every species die, cities and kingdoms die, but writings will live to the end of the world" (18). These valuable reprints and editions show that he was on to a fundamental truth.

—Joseph Connors
Columbia University

Paul Hofer

NOTO, IDEALSTADT UND STADTRAUM IM SIZILIANISCHEN 18. JAHRHUNDERT
Zurich: Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Institut für Geschichte und Theorie der Architektur, gta Verlag, 1996, xlv + 418 pp., 246 b. & w. illus. SF 130 (cloth). ISBN 3-85676-049-0.

In January 1693 a series of three severe earthquakes decimated the region of south-eastern Sicily known as the Val di Noto. Tens of thousands of people died from the collapse of buildings during the earthquakes and from injuries and disease in the following months. More than forty cities and towns, including Avola, Catania, Modica, Noto, Ragusa, and Siracusa, were severely damaged or destroyed. Some, like Avola and Noto, were so completely devastated that they were rebuilt on a new site. Many others were given new urban layouts. Taken together, the reconstruction of the cities of the Val di Noto stands as one of the most impressive achievements of urban planning in early modern Europe. The jewel of this reconstruction is the city of Noto.

Since the mid-1960s, beginning with articles by the Sicilian historian Corrado Gallo, a growing body of important scholarship on Noto has been published. English-speaking audiences may be most familiar with Stephen Tobriner's fundamental treatment of the subject, *The Genesis of Noto* (Berkeley, 1981). Critical work has also appeared in several articles and books by the French scholars Liliane Dufour and Henri Raymond, including most recently *Dalle baracche al Barocco* (Palermo, 1990).

Paul Hofer's posthumously published *Noto, Idealstadt und Stadtraum im sizilianischen 18. Jahrhundert* is an important contribution to this specialized literature and will also be of great interest to urban historians